United Nations A/C.2/70/2

General Assembly

Distr.: General
12 October 2015

Original: English

Seventieth session
Second Committee
Agenda items 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 (a) and (b), 23 (a), 24 (a), 25 and 26

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Letter dated 7 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chair of the Global Coordination Bureau of the Least Developed Countries, I have the honour to transmit herewith the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the annual ministerial meeting of the least developed countries, held in New York on 1 October 2015 (see annex).

15-17631 (E) 231015

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I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 (a) and (b), 23 (a), 24 (a), 25 and 26.

(*Signed*) Abulkalam Abdul **Momen**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 7 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Ministerial Declaration of the Least Developed Countries, New York, 1 October 2015

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the least developed countries, having met in New York on 1 October 2015 to provide strategic guidance for the full, effective and timely implementation of the Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020,

Recalling the Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2011-2020, adopted at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/280 of 17 June 2011, which calls upon all the relevant stakeholders to commit to integrating and implementing the Programme of Action,

Reaffirming the overarching goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action to overcome the structural challenges faced by the least developed countries in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and enable graduation from the least developed country category,

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/35 of 23 July 2015 on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020,

Welcoming with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020,[1]

Taking note of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015,

Taking note also of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015,

We congratulate the United Nations on its seventieth anniversary and, while taking note of its many achievements, we reaffirm our commitment to its relevance and importance and look forward to its continued and further strengthened support to the least developed countries in addressing their development challenges and priorities;

1. We reiterate our firm commitment to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, including by integrating its provisions into our national policies and development frameworks and conducting regular reviews with the full involvement of all key stakeholders;

2. We express our serious concern that the global economy has been facing a challenging time for several years now with high volatility in macroeconomic and

[1] A/70/83-E/2015/75.

financial conditions, and the impact of global economic and financial crises have had serious adverse effects on the economic performance of the least developed countries, as evidenced by a substantial deceleration of their recent growth rate compared with the progress made during the past decade, with serious effects on the timely and effective implementation of the goals and targets of the Istanbul Programme of Action;

3. We recognize with deep concern that the least developed countries are disproportionately affected by the adverse impacts of climate change due to their location, low income, low institutional capacity and greater reliance on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture. We are deeply worried that increases in global temperature, sea level rise, ocean acidification and other climate change impacts are seriously affecting coastal areas and low-lying coastal least developed countries. We express our grave concern at the lack of progress in the current climate change negotiations and urge all parties to conclude the negotiations, with developed countries taking the lead to ambitiously cut greenhouse gas emissions and provide adequate, predictable and additional financial and technological resources to the least developed countries. We look forward to the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in France in 2015, which should result in an ambitious outcome both in terms of mitigation, adaptation and financing. In this regard, we strongly call for the 2015 Paris climate agreement to:

(a) be legally binding;

(b) limit global average temperature increase to well below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels;

(c) reflect legal parity between the mitigation and adaptation aspects of the global response to climate change;

(d) agree on the full, effective and timely operationalization of the Green Climate Fund;

(e) provide for the replenishment of the Least Developed Countries Fund to ensure direct, predictable and sufficient funds to address adaptation needs of the least developed countries;

(f) establish explicit provisions that ensure that the strongest possible efforts will be made to achieve and continuously enhance national and global mitigation action;

(g) anchor loss and damage as a stand-alone element that is separate and distinct from adaptation in the 2015 Paris climate change agreement;

4. Desertification, land degradation, drought, floods, including glacial lakes outburst floods, cyclones and coastal erosion driven by sea level rise, salinization and other natural disasters are major obstacles for the least developed countries to achieve sustainable development. There should be enhanced financial and technological support from the development partners, development banks and the Global Environment Facility to address desertification, soil infertility, droughts, floods, coastal erosion and salinization and to secure a land-degradation-neutral world;

5. We recognize that the least developed countries represent an enormous human and natural resource potential for world economic growth, welfare,

prosperity and food and energy security. Therefore, a successful, renewed and strengthened global partnership that effectively addresses the special needs of the least developed countries will contribute to the cause of peace, prosperity and sustainable development for all. Further strengthening our collective actions towards enabling the young populations and women of the least developed countries will more effectively contribute to equitable and inclusive development, poverty eradication, job creation and social justice;

6. The demographic transition is key to building human capital and harnessing the demographic dividend. To this end, there should be strengthened collective efforts by the least developed countries and their development partners to realize the demographic dividend in the least developed countries by pursuing effective policies and actions on education, training, employment, primary health, including voluntary family planning, girls' and women's empowerment, gender equality and issues of development related to youth;

7. We underline the need for building productive capacity and structural transformation in the least developed countries as a means for increasing economic, environmental and social development and building resilience against shocks and vulnerabilities. In this regard, we stress that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development opens up new opportunities to scale up the structural transformation of the least developed countries, accelerating growth and fostering inclusive development, including by employment generation and poverty eradication;

8. We emphasize that the development of physical infrastructure is an important prerequisite for sustained economic growth and sustainable development, and significant amounts of investment and technology are essential, including through public-private partnerships, innovative financing, regional integration and appropriate institutions and regulation, to bridge the existing savings-investment gap in the least developed countries. In this regard, we will strengthen the underlying investment climate, with enhanced support of the development partners and international financial institutions, including by improving predictability, governance and transparency, as well as in procurement practices and policies. We call upon the development partners to provide enhanced financial and technical support to the least developed countries for their infrastructure development and management. We look forward to the establishment and effective functioning of a new multi-stakeholder forum to bridge the infrastructure gap, which should give special priority to the needs and challenges of the least developed countries;

9. We recognize that agriculture, food and nutritional security and rural development are vitally important for the least developed countries. Agriculture plays a crucial role both in promoting food security and as the major economic activity for much of the population, with direct linkages to the eradication of poverty and hunger, rural development and gender equality and empowerment of women, as well as exports, commodity and production diversification and agro-processing capacity. We therefore underline the need for adequate investment in physical infrastructure, scientific and technological development, research and agricultural extension services in the least developed countries. We recognize that commodity diversification and value addition as well as the effective participation of the least developed countries in regional and global value chains by upgrading and increasing the domestic value-added and technology content of their products are vitally important so that they can gain the maximum benefit from their agricultural products;

10. We note with concern that the efforts made by the least developed countries towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals only made limited progress due to a variety of internal and external factors, namely, limited productive capacity, various kinds of shocks and crises, unmet official development assistance commitments, growing debt burden, unfavourable market access conditions, and inadequate foreign direct investment inflows, among others;

11. We reaffirm our rejection of unilateral economic, financial or trade measures that are not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations and that impede economic and social development in the least developed countries;

12. We welcome the agenda, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", adopted by consensus at the summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, held in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015.[2] We also welcome the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 17 July 2015 and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015.[3] We are happy to note that these new development agendas put in place a number of key development challenges and priorities of the least developed countries at their front and centre;

13. We are convinced that a business as usual approach will clearly be insufficient to achieve the ambitions of the global Sustainable Development Goals by the least developed countries and these countries would need additional, preferential, concessional and most favourable treatment for their access to markets, finance, technologies, know-how and other resources and differential and flexible treatment in undertaking international commitments and obligations known as "differential and preferential treatment for the least developed countries";

14. We recognize that the least developed countries would need a substantial amount of additional resources to achieve accelerated progress in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to reach the stage of graduation. We will make our best efforts to effectively mobilize domestic resources, use them efficiently, build up financial infrastructure and capacities, and put in place appropriate regulatory measures and institutions. We are however, concerned that there is a limited scope to meet the multiple development finance requirements of the least developed countries with their narrow economic bases, widespread poverty and underdeveloped private sector. We therefore, need significantly scaled up international support including through official development assistance, trade, debt relief, foreign direct investment, migration and technology transfer;

15. We call upon the development partners to enhance their support to the least developed countries to ensure that they are not bypassed in the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

16. We reiterate that official development assistance continues to be the largest and a critical source of external financing for the development of the least developed countries and that it provides a buffer to weather the impacts of the

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[2] See General Assembly resolution 70/1, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

[3] See General Assembly resolution 69/313, annex.

unstable and volatile global economic environment. We have shared serious concern over the fall in official development assistance to the least developed countries by 15 per cent in 2014 and welcome the commitment of Member States to reversing this decline.[3] We welcome the decision by the European Union, which reaffirms its collective commitment to achieve the 0.7 per cent of the official development assistance/gross national income target within the time frame of the post-2015 agenda, and undertakes to meet collectively the target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of official development assistance/gross national income to least developed countries in the short term and to reach 0.20 per cent of official development assistance/gross national income to least developed countries within the time frame of the post-2015 agenda.[3] We also welcome the provisions of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda that encourage official development assistance providers to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of official development assistance/gross national income to least developed countries and express encouragement to those who are allocating at least 50 per cent of their official development assistance to least developed countries. These are some qualitative and quantitative changes in the decades-long target on official development assistance for the least developed countries. We call upon all development partners to fulfil these targets;

17. We reiterate our call upon the donor countries to provide 0.20 per cent of their gross national income to the least developed countries by 2020 and 0.25 per cent of their gross national income by 2030 or at least 50 per cent of net official development assistance to the least developed countries;

18. We underline that the allocation of global official development assistance resources should take into account the structural handicaps and constraints which are unique to the least developed countries. We call upon development partners to ensure a right balance in the allocation of official development assistance among various sectors with particular focus on productive sectors, including infrastructure, agriculture and information and communications technology;

19. We stress the need for enhancing the quality of aid, including through transparency, accountability, long-term predictability and untying of aid for the least developed countries. We further emphasize that official development assistance should be channelled through a national budgetary system and should be aligned with national priorities based on the principle of national ownership and leadership in the development process;

20. We welcome the targets contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development related to migration and remittances and strongly urge partner countries to start taking action, specifically with respect to reducing to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances by 2030 and eliminating remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent, and to facilitate the orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies;

21. We recognize the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development. We also recognize that international migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance for the development of countries of origin, transit and destination, which requires coherent and comprehensive responses. We underline the urgent need to cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants, regardless of migration status, refugees and

displaced persons at their countries of origin, transit and destination. Such cooperation should also strengthen the resilience of communities hosting refugees, particularly in developing countries. We underline the right of migrants to return to their country of citizenship, and recall that States must ensure that their returning nationals are duly received;

22. We call upon the development partners to operationalize fully and in a timely manner the Green Climate Fund, with the goals of mobilizing $100 billion per year by 2020, the promotion and facilitation of clean development mechanism projects in the least developed countries and addressing the needs of people displaced as a result of extreme weather events. We stress that the allocation of adaptation and mitigation funds should be additional to official development assistance commitments and should be fair, equitable and proportionate to the impact of climate change;

23. We welcome the decision of the Board of the Green Climate Fund to aim for a 50:50 balance between mitigation and adaptation, over time on a grant equivalent basis, and to aim for a floor of 50 per cent of the adaptation allocation for particularly vulnerable countries, in particular the least developed countries. We call upon the international community to simplify the procedures for gaining access to all available climate finance;

24. We call upon the international community to promote needs-based and effective mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in the least developed countries, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities, taking into account their specific vulnerabilities and their difficulties in accessing available funding facilities for climate change adaptation, promotion of clean development and low-carbon economy;

25. We recognize that the income-based classifications of countries are becoming less and less relevant and unable to take into account fragility and other structural constraints, while the least developed countries represent the most homogenous group of countries with very few variations. We therefore, stress that the least developed country category should be universally recognized to facilitate a coordinated and coherent follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of progress made in these countries. We invite the General Assembly to undertake necessary measures in this regard during its seventieth session;

26. We invite the World Bank Group to enhance its financial and technical support, through the seventeenth replenishment of the International Development Association, for infrastructure and productive capacity-building as well as adaptation- and resilience-building of all least developed countries;

27. We recognize that while official development assistance must remain central and play a catalytic role, there is a need to tap additional resources, including through innovative financing mechanisms which can provide more stable and predictable resources for development and are based on new partnerships between countries at different levels of development and public and private actors. Specific mechanisms should be suggested and operationalized to mobilize additional resources for financing sustainable development. We stress that the innovative sources of financing should be additional, substantial and predictable and

disbursed in a manner that respects the priorities and special needs of the least developed countries and does not unduly burden them;

28. We underline the need to ensure that the interests of the least developed countries are given due priority in the future work of the World Trade Organization. We take note of the decisions taken by members of the World Trade Organization at the Ninth Ministerial Conference, held in Bali, Indonesia, from 3 to 6 December 2013, in particular the decisions on duty-free and quota-free market access for least developed countries,[4] preferential rules of origin for least developed countries[5] and operationalization of the waiver concerning preferential treatment to services and service suppliers of least developed countries,[6] as well as the agreement on trade facilitation.[7] While noting the progress made since the Bali conference in all these areas, we underline the need for full realization of the World Trade Organization Bali package for the least developed countries. We look forward to the successful outcome of the Tenth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, which will take place from 15 to 18 December 2015 in Nairobi;

29. We welcome the decision of the Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights of 11 June 2013 on the extension of the transition period under article 66.1 for least developed country members until 1 July 2021, which will allow the least developed countries more time to implement the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, while making full use of flexibilities provided by the Agreement.[8] We also request the members of the World Trade Organization to extend the transitional period under article 66.1 of the Agreement for least developed country members with respect to pharmaceutical products and for waivers from the obligations of articles 70.8 and 70.9 of the Agreement for as long as the member remains a least developed country;[9]

30. We welcome the initiatives taken by some countries in providing duty-free and quota-free market access to all products from all the least developed countries. However, we recognize that full implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access has yet to be achieved, and the least developed countries have not been able to meaningfully benefit from the global trading system due to restrictive market entry conditions and supply-side constraints. In this regard, we call upon the States members to:

(a) Realize the full and timely implementation of the decision to provide duty-free and quota-free market access, on a lasting basis, for all products originating from all least developed countries, which should be accomplished in a manner that does not diminish the existing market access enjoyed by any least developed country, adopt simple, transparent, and flexible preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from the least developed countries,[10] resist protectionist

[4] World Trade Organization, document WT/MIN(13)/44.
[5] World Trade Organization, document WT/MIN(13)/42.
[6] World Trade Organization, document WT/MIN(13)/43.
[7] World Trade Organization, document WT/L/931.
[8] World Trade Organization, document IP/C/64.
[9] Communication dated 20 February 2015 from Bangladesh on behalf of the least developed country members to the Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (World Trade Organization, document IP/C/W/605).
[10] World Trade Organization, document TN/C/W/63.

tendencies and rectify trade-distorting measures, including in agriculture, that are inconsistent with multilateral obligations;

(b) Address non-tariff measures and eliminate arbitrary or unjustified non-tariff barriers;

(c) Facilitate and accelerate negotiations with acceding least developed countries based on the accession guidelines adopted by the General Council of the World Trade Organization in December 2002 and the decision to further strengthen, streamline and operationalize the 2002 accession guidelines for least developed countries adopted by the General Council in July 2012;

31. We take note of the submission by the group of least developed countries of the World Trade Organization to receive special priority and preference in services sectors and modes of supply of export interest to the least developed countries.[11] We take note of the notifications made by some members of the World Trade Organization to the Council for Trade in Services of preferential measures to enhance least developed countries' participation in world services trade.[12] In this regard, we urge all other members of the World Trade Organization to do so and undertake measures to extend specific preferences to the services and service suppliers of least developed countries so that they could enhance their participation in services trade;

32. We also call upon donors to provide stronger support to the least developed countries to build their trade and supply-side capacity by providing at least 50 per cent share of the Aid for Trade. In this regard, we welcome the launch of the new phase of the Enhanced Integrated Framework for trade-related assistance for Least Developed Countries for 2016-2022 and call for enhanced and predictable resources in support of the needs and demands of the least developed countries expressed through their national development strategies, as agreed upon in the Istanbul Programme of Action;

33. We recognize that foreign direct investment constitutes a dominant part of private capital flows to the least developed countries and plays a complementary and catalytic role in building and strengthening productive capacity in these countries. The least developed countries have made strong efforts to attract increased foreign direct investment flows and enhance their benefits for their economies, which were complemented by actions by their development partners. These actions appear to have had a positive impact, as indicated by a significant rise in foreign direct investment flows to the least developed countries in recent years. We are however concerned that the total share of foreign direct investment to the least developed countries in global foreign direct investment remains only around 1.7 per cent, underscoring that much more needs to be done;

34. We stress that stronger and more focused policies, strategies and mechanisms by the least developed countries, home countries of foreign direct investment, international organizations and other stakeholders can substantially increase foreign direct investment flows to the least developed countries in the coming years. In this regard, we recall the decision contained in the Istanbul Programme of Action and reaffirmed in General Assembly resolution 67/220 to adopt, expand and implement investment promotion regimes for the least developed

[11] World Trade Organization, document S/C/W/356.

[12] Available from www.wto.org/english/news_e/news15_e/serv_03aug15_e.htm.

countries. We welcome the decision contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries and the offer to provide financial and technical support for project preparation and contract negotiation, advisory support in investment-related dispute resolution, access to information on investment facilities and risk insurance and guarantees such as through the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency;

35. In this regard, we call upon Member States to undertake a decision at the seventieth session of the General Assembly to establish an international investment support centre for the least developed countries under the auspices of the United Nations to provide a one-stop arrangement to help stimulate foreign direct investment in the least developed countries, which can make available the following interrelated and mutually reinforcing services, as already agreed upon in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda:

(a) An information depository for investment facilities in the least developed countries;

(b) Technical support to assist the least developed countries in preparing project documents and negotiating complex large-scale contracts;

(c) Advisory support in dispute resolution;

(d) Risk insurance and guarantees in close collaboration with the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development;

36. We underline that the long-term framework of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals should not only ensure achieving the goals and targets, but needs to secure the sustainability of their achievements. We are concerned that the biggest part of the risks and uncertainties that could derail global human progress over the next decades relates to climate change and other severe shocks and crises. We note with concern that the spread of the Ebola virus disease in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu, a devastating earthquake in Nepal and widespread floods in Myanmar have wreaked havoc in the lives and livelihoods of these countries. We therefore want the establishment and operationalization of a crisis mitigation and resilience-building fund for the least developed countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the outcome document of the International Conference on Financing for Development;

37. Bringing about structural transformation in the economies of the least developed countries would require transfer, acquisition and upgrade of technologies, including new technologies and broadband, domestic capacity and a knowledge base. In this regard, we welcome the decision of the General Assembly [13] with regard to a technology bank and science, technology and innovation supporting mechanism dedicated to the least developed countries. We welcome the feasibility study for a United Nations technology bank for the least developed countries and its recommendations undertaken by the High-level Panel on the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries. We also appreciate the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for its secretariat support extended to the High-level Panel and request it to continue its support in the operationalization

[13] See General Assembly resolution 68/224.

of the technology bank. We call upon the Government of Turkey to continue its support to the technology bank and call upon other donor countries to make strong contributions to the technology bank by providing at least 0.1 per cent of their official development assistance to the technology bank for its effective functioning. In this regard, we commend the Government of Turkey for its generous offer to host the technology bank and to support the work of the High-level Panel. We request the Secretary-General to undertake all necessary measures to fully operationalize the technology bank during the seventieth session of the General Assembly, as recommended by the High-level Panel and in compliance with target 17.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals;

38. We underline that the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative have created additional fiscal space in many least developed countries. However, we are concerned that there are risks of re-indebtedness because of the huge development needs in the least developed countries, and it is a matter of deep concern that in spite of the Initiatives, many least developed countries still struggle with a high debt burden, with 12 of them at a high risk of debt distress[14] and we call upon development partners to undertake effective measures to cancel all multilateral and bilateral debts owed by all least developed countries to creditors, both public and private, and to arrange debt standstill and debt swaps until the debt cancellation is fully realized. We also call upon creditors, both public and private, for additional effective measures to facilitate financing of our economic development, including access to both concessional and non-concessional resources for investment in critically needed infrastructure and development projects. We also underline the need for multilateral frameworks for sovereign debt restructuring and welcome the adoption of the resolution on the Basic Principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Process by the General Assembly on 10 September 2015;[15]

39. We stress that the Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All initiative, including its targets and the recently held Sustainable Energy for All Forum will remain a useful framework in the field of energy for the decades ahead. In line with the least developed countries launch of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All, held on 28 July 2014, in Cotonou, Benin, the least developed countries should receive a special focus throughout the decade. We call upon the development partners to support sustainable energy projects in the least developed countries with enhanced financial resources and technology transfer on special and preferential terms with a view to ensuring universal access to sustainable energy, especially in the least developed countries;

40. We stress that the Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All initiative, including its targets and the recently held Sustainable Energy for All Forum will remain a useful framework in the field of energy for the decades ahead;

41. We underline that North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, is vital to the least developed countries, particularly in regard to technical assistance, sharing of best practices in terms of their development, especially in areas of productive capacity-building, infrastructure, energy, science and technology, trade, investment and transit transport cooperation, and we call upon the countries of the

[14] See A/70/83-E/2015/75, para. 81.

[15] General Assembly resolution 69/319.

South to further strengthen their support to the least developed countries in all of these areas in a predictable manner;

42. We welcome ongoing efforts to mobilize resources for the full operationalization of the South-South technology transfer facility for the least developed countries, launched in Cotonou in July 2014, as an integral part of the Member States' proposed global South-South expo and meeting centre;[16]

43. We recognize that the United Nations development system is challenged to meet the growing demands for more varied assistance by doing more, quicker and better. We invite all organizations of the United Nations system and other multilateral organizations, including the World Bank Group and international and regional financial institutions, to contribute to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action including by implementing scaled-up programmes of financial and technical cooperation, to integrate it into their programmes of work, participate fully in its review at the national, subregional, regional and global levels and include in their annual reports to the Executive Boards and to the Economic and Social Council the progress made in this regard, as mandated by the Council in paragraph 9 of its resolution 2013/46;

44. We welcome the decisions contained in General Assembly resolution 69/231 on holding the comprehensive high-level midterm review of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in Antalya, Turkey, for a period of three days in June 2016 and look forward to its successful outcome. We also welcome with deep appreciation the generous offer of the Government of Turkey to host the high-level conference on the midterm review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries;

45. We underline that since the second half of the Istanbul Programme of Action implementation period coincides with the first five years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there should be strong synergy and coherence between the implementation of the two processes with a view to speedily realizing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, the midterm review should launch concrete and specific global initiatives and provide strong impetus to the realization of the existing initiatives, building on the decisions contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the outcome of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It should also provide guidance to review the least developed country criteria, taking into account the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals;

46. We recall the decision contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that effective linkages will be made with the follow-up and review arrangements of all relevant United Nations conferences and processes, including on the least developed countries, and underline the need for strong coordination and coherence in the follow-up of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Istanbul Programme of Action;

47. We reiterate our call to the international community, especially the United Nations system, to extend necessary support to the least developed countries

[16] Letter of commitment signed in Macau on 26 August 2015.

in strengthening their national statistical capacities to develop their national databases that contain national and international data on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with related metadata that are available to all interested users. We request the Secretary-General to mobilize adequate resources for the least developed countries to enable them to actively participate in all review and follow-up activities at the national, regional and global levels;

48. We request the Office of the High Representative to extend necessary support to the least developed countries in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through coordination with various United Nations entities, raising global awareness, mobilizing international support and resources in favour of the least developed countries, building multi-stakeholder partnerships and reaching out to all stakeholders, including by establishing partnerships with civil society and the private sector, to enhance support for the three groups of countries;

49. We recall paragraph 26 of General Assembly resolution 67/220, which invites the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, to include implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action as a standing item on the agenda of the Board, also recall the invitation of the General Assembly in its resolution 69/231 to the Secretary-General to convene a United Nations system high-level event during the comprehensive high-level midterm review, and in this connection invite the Secretary-General to organize a special meeting of the Board during the midterm review conference with a view to ensuring full mobilization of the United Nations system in support of the least developed countries and to ensure full and coordinated implementation by the system of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the midterm conference outcome, the post-2015 development agenda and the outcomes of all other international and regional conferences and processes as they relate to the least developed countries;

50. We consider that a Heads of State and Government level meeting of the least developed countries will be held during the midterm review conference in Antalya, Turkey;

51. We stress that the Office of the High Representative, as the focal point, in accordance with mandates given in General Assembly resolution 56/227 of 24 December 2001, should undertake the necessary preparations and mobilize and coordinate the active involvement of the organizations of the United Nations system;

52. We underscore the critical importance of the full and effective participation of the least developed countries in the comprehensive global midterm review of the Programme of Action and its preparatory process at the national, regional and global levels, stress that adequate resources should be provided, and in this regard we request the Secretary-General to mobilize extrabudgetary resources in order to cover the cost of participation of an adequate number of government representatives from each least developed country in the high-level midterm review;

53. We recall the ambitious goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action to enable half of the number of least developed countries to reach the stage of graduation by 2020 and commit to take the necessary steps to complete the graduation process. We underline that each instance of successful graduation will constitute an extraordinary success not only for the countries themselves, but also for the United Nations and for development cooperation by the international

community. We are encouraged that notwithstanding persisting challenges and constraints, several least developed countries have announced their intention to reach the status of graduation by or around 2020. Countries such as Angola, Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal and Rwanda, among others, have set graduation as a goal in their national development strategies;

54. We recall paragraph 26 of General Assembly resolution 68/224, which requests all relevant organizations of the United Nations system, led by the Office of the High Representative, to extend necessary support in a coordinated manner to the countries that have expressed their intention to reach the status of graduation by 2020 in preparing their graduation and transition strategy;

55. We invite the United Nations System organizations, led by the Office of the High Representative, to extend the necessary technical support to the countries aspiring to graduation in developing their graduation and smooth transition strategies. We call upon the development partners to support the implementation of the graduation strategy with a view to enabling them to graduate from the list within the stipulated time;

56. We call upon the Committee for Development Policy of the Economic and Social Council to continue to give due consideration to the specific geographical constraints and vulnerabilities of each least developed country, including small island and landlocked least developed countries, conflict and post-conflict least developed countries, least developed countries with mountains and fragile ecology, low-lying coastal least developed countries and those with extreme proneness to natural disasters, extreme dependency on primary commodity exports, low agricultural productivity and food insecurity, climate and environmental vulnerability and energy insecurity;

57. We welcome with appreciation the Cotonou agenda for productive capacity-building in the least developed countries, which was adopted at the ministerial conference, held in Cotonou, Republic of Benin, from 28 to 31 July 2014 on the theme "New partnerships for productive capacity-building in the least developed countries", and invite all stakeholders to take appropriate actions for the implementation and follow-up of the Cotonou agenda for productive capacity-building in the least developed countries, in particular the key initiatives;

58. We also welcome the Kathmandu declaration for the sustainable graduation of Asia-Pacific least developed countries, which was adopted at the ministerial meeting of Asia-Pacific least developed countries on graduation and the post-2015 development agenda, held from 16 to 18 December 2014 in Kathmandu and jointly hosted by the Government of Nepal and the Office of the High Representative, and the Milan declaration for the graduation of African least developed countries, adopted at the ministerial meeting, held in Milan, Italy, from 8 to 10 June 2015, to examine issues related to structural transformation, graduation and the post-2015 development agenda, which was jointly hosted by the Government of Italy and the Office of the High Representative. We invite all stakeholders to take appropriate actions for the implementation and follow-up of the outcomes of those ministerial meetings;

59. We most sincerely acknowledge the supportive role being played by the Group of Friends of Least Developed Countries and invite the Group to further strengthen its support to the effective realization of the Istanbul Programme of

Action, the midterm conference outcome, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the outcomes of all other international and regional conferences and processes as they relate to the least developed countries;

60. We express our deep appreciation to the Republic of Benin for its able chairmanship, tireless efforts and excellent leadership provided to the least developed countries in the past three years as the Chair of the Global Coordination Bureau of the Least Developed Countries and look forward to its continued support to the promotion of the interests of the least developed countries;

61. We warmly welcome the nomination by consensus of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to chair the Global Coordination Bureau for the next three years;

62. We recall annex II of the Ministerial Declaration of Least Developed Countries entitled "Decision on a coordination mechanism for the least developed countries, adopted at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 15 November 2001" (see A/C.2/56/5), and paragraph 44 of the Ministerial Declaration of 2012 and reaffirm that the chairmanship of the Bureau will rotate alternately between the African Group, including Haiti, and the Asian-Pacific Group, with the chairperson from the African Group undertaking the preparation of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the least developed countries to be held by the end of the current decade.